

me that we ought to get away from Pont Aven by the first possible train."

"Father dear, what did Peridot say to you before he brought the Hironde into the wind off Les Verrés? I couldn't hear, of course. But do you think I could not read your face? Had you not to decide whether or not you would risk my life as well as your own? You were sure of Lorry—who wouldn't be? But it came hard to sacrifice me as well. Did you obey commonsense then? Did you even hesitate?"

Ingersoll threw up a hand in a gesture of sheer hopelessness, and pretended to search for a box of matches on the mantelpiece. "So be it!" he said wearily. "Don't think I am afraid of any rival in your affection, Yvonne. Perhaps your woman's heart is wiser than my gray head. But, mark you, I make two stipulations! No matter what transpires, you must come home before eleven o'clock; and it is impossible, absolutely impossible, that your mother and I should ever meet!"

He was choosing his words carelessly that night. How "impossible" it would have seemed that morning had some wizard foretold the events of the succeeding hours! But Yvonne also was deaf to all but his yielding. She ran to him, and drew his face close to hers.

"Dad," she said, kissing him, "you are the best and dearest man in the world. How could your wife ever have left you? If I live a hundred years, I shall never understand that."

She was going; but he stayed her.

"Yvonne, be governed by one vital consideration. Those two men in the cabin must have caught some glimmer of the truth from your mother's ravings. But they are strangers, and their own troubles may have preoccupied their minds to the exclusion of the affairs of others. The only person in Pont Aven who knows something of my sad history is Madame Pitou. She has been aware all these years that my wife was alive, or at any rate that she was living after I came here. She is certainly to be trusted. Take care that none other learns your mother's identity. I ask this for her own sake."

The girl smiled wistfully. "Yet you would have me believe you an ogre!" she said.

A FEW minutes later Tollemache arrived. He found his friend sitting by the fire, with a pipe that had gone out between his lips.

"Hello, Socrates!" he cried. "You're toggled for the party, I see. Where's Yvonne?"

"She was unhappy because of that poor woman who lost her husband; so I let her hurry off to Julia's. They've been taken there, I suppose?"

"Yes. It was awfully distressing. Peridot carried Mrs. Carmac off the boat, and by some mismanagement the light from a lantern fell on her husband's face. Ill as she was, she realized that he was dead. She screamed something I couldn't attach any meaning to, and her cries as she was being put into the hotel auto were heartrending. By gad! a beastly experience!"

"What did she say, Lorry?"

"I hardly know. It sounded like a cry for Yvonne, and a protest against Heaven that her husband should be taken and she left. 'I am the real offender!' she said. 'The punishment should be mine, not his!' Somehow, not the sort of thing you'd expect from a distracted wife. I guess she's nearly out of her mind."

"Naturally. Think what it meant to a delicate woman to be imprisoned in that deck saloon when the yacht keeled over! You see, Lorry, we were buoyed up with the hope of being able to effect a rescue. She, on the other hand, must have gazed into the opening doors of eternity. Pull up a chair. There's time for a cigarette. Seven o'clock is the supper hour."

Tollemache obeyed. Ingersoll relighted his pipe, and the two smoked in silence for awhile. Then the younger man glanced at his companion with a quizzical scrutiny that was altogether approving.

"Glad to see you've bucked up, old sport," he said. "You were thoroughly knocked out by the time we reached the quay. I know why, of course."

Ingersoll stooped to throw back into the fire a half-burnt log that had fallen out on to the hearth. "Do you?" he said calmly.

"Great Scott! I should think so, indeed! It was one thing that we three men should go into that death trap, but quite another that you should bring Yvonne into it. Bless your heart, Yvonne was watching Peridot and



"It was not chance, but the operation of a law as certain as death."

you, and told me what you were saying. 'Dear old Dad,' she said, 'he feels like Jephthah when he had to sacrifice his daughter.' Made me go cold all over. Gee whizz! I was pleased it wasn't I who had to make the choice between turning back and running into safety—where my sister—or my wife—was concerned."

Tollemache stammered and reddened as his tongue tripped on the concluding words; but the older man paid no heed. He was too profoundly relieved by an explanation that differed so materially from the avowal he dreaded.

"By the way, Lorry, that journey to Paris is postponed," he said after a pause.

"Good! It was hardly like you to bolt out of the place when you were most needed. Those sailormen would be at sixes and sevens tomorrow if we didn't show up."

"I must leave that part of the business to you," said Ingersoll slowly. "I mean to efface myself entirely. Indeed, I'm thinking of paying a long deferred visit to Forbes, at Concarneau. Yvonne and you can manage splendidly in my absence. Now, don't argue, there's a good chap. I rather lost my head on being brought into contact with two people with whom I quarreled years ago; or, to be precise, my animus was not against the poor fellow who is dead. Of course his wife is bound to recall the facts, and it would place her in a difficult position when she discovered that I was one of her rescuers. Women are likely to form curious notions about such matters. It was an extraordinary misfortune, to say the least, that her husband should be the one man whom we failed to save. I think you follow me?"

"Oh, yes—the irony of fate, and that sort of thing," said Tollemache with an air of wisdom. He was convinced that he understood the position exactly.

Ingersoll stood upright, drew in a deep breath that

was curiously like a sigh, and tapped his pipe against the stone pillars of the fireplace. "I hear sounds of revelry by night," he said. "Henri has arrived with the bagpipes."

"Dash it all!" growled Tollemache. "I don't feel a scrap like dancing this evening. That unhappy woman's shrieks are still ringing in my ears."

"We must adjust ourselves to the conditions," said Ingersoll quietly. "Life, like art, is a matter of light and shade. Each of us sails a tiny craft through an unknown sea, and if we can give a brother or sister a cheery hail—why, let us do it, though our own vessel be sinking steadily. I'm in no mood for revel, goodness knows! but, with Yvonne absent, you and I must help Mère Pitou to entertain her guests. Some excellent folk are coming here from Nizon and Nevez. Her sister is driving in from Riec. You'll hear some real old Breton ballads tonight. Pity Yvonne isn't here to translate them. My acquaintance with the language is limited; but Madeleine or Barbe will tell you the drift of the words."

"Won't Yvonne be here later?" inquired Tollemache, striving to cloak his disappointment.

"I'm inclined to think she will remain with Mrs. Carmac till eleven or thereabouts."

"But the doctor is there—and a nurse."

"Unless I am greatly mistaken, Mrs. Carmac will prefer Yvonne to any nurse. There is a cousinship of nationality, you know. Now, Lorry, no grumbling. Let's make the best of things."

A KNOCK at the door heralded the entrance of a dozen or more smiling and self-possessed Bretons. The studio was the only room in the house large enough to hold the company that would gather within the next few minutes. The living room was packed with tables

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